
Department of Education
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Paul Flinter, Chief
(860) 807-2050



Department of Social Services
25 Sigourney Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5033
Peter Palermino, Manager
1-800-811-6141

SCHOOL READINESS

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ALERT

Date: April 19, 1999

Number: TA/SR # 99-02

X **Priority Schools**
X **Severe Need Schools**

TO: Mayors and Superintendents of the School Readiness Grant
School Readiness Council Chairs, Co-Chairs and Liaisons

FROM: Paul Flinter, Chief
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services
State Department of Education

Peter Palermino, Manager
Child Care Team
State Department of Social Services

RE: Serving 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old Children with Disabilities

The school readiness legislation, Public Act 97-259, provides that the State shall encourage and provide for the following school readiness outcomes:

- ⇒ *Assure that children with disabilities are integrated into programs available to children who are not disabled, particularly in school readiness and child day care programs (Section 1 (9)).*
- ⇒ *Provide education and enhancement of a family's capacity to meet the special needs of children, including children with disabilities (Section 1 (7)).*
- ⇒ *Reduce educational costs by decreasing the need for special education services for school age children and avoiding grade repetition (Section 1 (8)).*

The State Departments of Education and Social Services would like to remind all grantees and sub-grantees that all children with disabilities and their families should have access to the range of community options and opportunities available to children without disabilities and their families, including school readiness programs.

There are three major federal laws that provide for and protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Any agency or program funded by school readiness money must meet all of the obligations and responsibilities required by these laws.

An overview of each of the major federal laws is provided for your information.

- ◆ The **Americans with Disabilities Act** (ADA) provides that a program may not deny a child access or admission to a program if the reason for such denial is simply that the child, or anyone close to the child, is disabled or perceived to be disabled. The ADA further requires that each child's condition and needs must be evaluated on an individual basis and each child must be entitled to equal, non-segregated inclusion in a program to the maximum extent appropriate to the child's needs.
- ◆ Another federal law, **Section 504** is a basic civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability by recipients of federal funds. Section 504 specifically provides that no child shall, solely by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or be discriminated against, in any program or activity that receives federal funds.
- ◆ Under the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** (IDEA), school districts are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for children with disabilities. School districts, based on the individual needs of the child, may opt to include a child with a disability in a community setting in order to meet that child's individual needs as part of a child's individualized educational program (IEP), including placement in a school readiness program with typically developing children.

It is important for programs to recognize the value of serving all children, including children with disabilities. School readiness programs should be able to demonstrate their commitment to serving all children and families equally. Programs can demonstrate their commitment by:

- ◆ Developing a set of values regarding serving all children and recognizing that all children have different talents, abilities and gifts to offer
- ◆ Developing a vision and program goals that articulate a commitment to serving all children
- ◆ Developing and implementing program policies and practices that ensure the access of all children and families
- ◆ Providing a program that provides a climate that supports diversity, change and belonging
- ◆ Creating an environment that promotes and provides multiple opportunities for learning for children at various levels of development
- ◆ Providing for a variety of adaptations and accommodations in order to meet individual children's needs
- ◆ Providing inclusive opportunities for all children and their families to engage in the environment and all aspects of the school readiness program
- ◆ Assisting families with access to all community options and opportunities available to all children and their families
- ◆ Providing for and engaging in on-going collaboration, coordination and effective communication in order better serve all children and their families, and
- ◆ Ensuring an on-going professional development program and/or access to a variety of professional development opportunities that provide for staff to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to work with children with disabilities

There are a number of resources available to provide information or assistance with regard to serving young children with disabilities. Following is a list of some resources that grantees and sub-grantees may access:

⇒ State Department of Education

Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services

25 Industrial Park Road

Middletown, CT 06457

(860) 807-2054

Contact: Maria Synodi, Preschool Special Education Program Manager

** provides information and assistance regarding IDEA - preschool special education programs.*

⇒ State Department of Social Services

25 Sigourney Street

Hartford, CT 06106

(860) 424-5332

ATT: Sue Wilson or Amparo Gracia (or regional DSS offices)

** provides information and assistance regarding payment policies in early care and education and training opportunities for parents, caregivers.*

⇒ Special Education Resource Center (SERC)

25 Industrial Park Road

Middletown, CT 06457

(860) 632-1485

** provides a resource library of books and videos and provides information and assistance regarding serving children with disabilities and training opportunities for parents and professionals.*

⇒ Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC)

1 Main Street

Niantic, CT

(860) 739-3089

1-800-445-CPAC

** provides information and assistance to families with a child with a disability and information and resources, including a newsletter.*

The State Department of Education and Social Services will be planning and supporting a number of activities, including providing professional development opportunities specifically for school readiness programs. Please be on the alert for further information and training opportunities regarding working with children with disabilities and their families.